

**IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE**

In re Application of: )  
Nicholas Alan Timothy COLFORD, et al ) Group Art Unit:  
Application No.: Not Yet Assigned )  
Filed: August 22, 2000 )  
For: CONTAINER EQUIPPED WITH AT )  
LEAST ONE CLOSURE DEVICE ) Examiner:

Commissioner for Patents  
Washington D.C. 20231

**PRELIMINARY AMENDMENT**

Sir:

Prior to examination of the above referenced application, please amend the claims as follows:

Please amend claims 1-14 as follows:

1. (Amended) A container equipped with a closure device that permits a user to manipulate or withdraw an object placed within said container, wherein said closure device has a plane and is comprised of a closure means that can deform elastically essentially in the plane of the closure device to change from a closed state of rest under no external stress to an open active state under an external stress.

2. (Amended) The container as claimed in claim 1, wherein the closure device comprises at least one rigid peripheral support structure attached to which is the closure means that is comprised of elastically deformable means which intersect each other and surround a closure member such that when the elastically deformable means are in a state of rest under no external stress the closure member is closed.

3. (Amended) The container as claimed in claim 2, wherein the peripheral structure is a rigid frame on which the elastically deformable means are stretched between two roughly opposite points.

4. (Amended) The container as claimed in claim 3, wherein the:

- peripheral structure comprises at least one ring having an inside diameter D and a center C,
- elastically deformable means are elastic bands attached in groups of two juxtaposed elastic bands and fixed to the ring at their diametrically opposed ends.

5. (Amended) The container as claimed in claim 4, wherein the closure member is a sleeve made of flexible material having a diameter D and a length of at least twice this diameter, each end of the sleeve passes through each pair of elastic bands in the center C of the ring, where the sleeve is contracted radially in the closed rest state of the device, or defines a single through opening for the object in the open state of the device, in which state the elastic bands are deformed radially by the passage of said object.

6. (Amended) The container as claimed in claim 5, wherein one end of the sleeve is fixed peripherally to an outer face of a first ring and the other end of said sleeve is fixed peripherally to an opposite outer face of a second ring identical to the first ring, the sleeve being contracted radially in a middle zone between each pair of elastic bands, the elastic bands being attached to the first or second rings which are themselves fixed to each other via their inner faces.

7. (Amended) The container as claimed in claim 6, wherein the first and second

rings are offset angularly with respect to each other while twisting the sleeve axially, this angular offset being preferably approximately 90°.

8. (Amended) The container as claimed in claim 6, wherein the first and second rings are held together by adhesive bonding or by stitching.

9. (Amended) The container as claimed in claim 5, wherein the sleeve is made of fabric.

10. (Amended) The container as claimed in claim 5, wherein the elastic bands are eight in number and juxtaposed and attached in pairs distributed in such a way as to pass through the center of their supporting ring so as to form in the supporting ring eight essentially identical sectors.

11. (Amended) The container as claimed in claim 5, wherein the elastic bands are under tension on their supporting ring in the closed state of the device.

12. (Amended) The container as claimed in claim 1, wherein its shape is that of a straight or curved cylinder and that it possesses a closure device at each end.

13. (Amended) The container as claimed in claim 1, wherein it includes at least a part made of a transparent material.

14. (Amended) The container as claimed in claim 1, wherein the container is made of materials suitable for weightless conditions.

Remarks

Attached as an Appendix is a marked-up copy of all of the claims, demonstrating the amendments made to the claims. Applicants respectfully submit that no prohibited new matter has been introduced by this Preliminary Amendment. The claims have been amended so as to avoid formal objections and to correct the grammar used within the claims. For example claim 10 was amended to provide established claim terminology to describe the intended scope of the claims, i.e. change "characterized in that" to "wherein", and claims 8-14 were amended to avoid optional language. Such changes do not narrow the claimed subject matter.

If there is any fee due in connection with the filing of this Preliminary Amendment, please charge the fees to our Deposit Account No. 50-0310.

Respectfully submitted,

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Dated: August 22, 2001

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APPENDIX

1. A container [(1)] equipped with a closure device [(10)] that allows an object (100) to be placed in said container (1), particularly for the purposes of manipulating it, or allows it to be withdrawn from said container, the closure device (10) having a plane and comprising closure means (40) that permits a user to manipulate, or withdraw an object placed within said container, wherein said closure device has a plane and is comprised of a closure means that can deform elastically essentially in the plane of the closure device to change from a closed state of rest under no external stress to an open active state under an external stress [wherein said closure means (40) can deform elastically essentially in the plane of the closure device (10)].

2. The container [(1)] as claimed in claim 1, wherein the closure device [(10)] comprises at least one rigid peripheral support structure [(30;50)] attached to which [are attached the] is the closure means comprised of elastically deformable means [(40)] which intersect each other and surround a closure member [(60)] such [a way as to tend to close it] that when the elastically deformable means are in a state of rest under no external stress the closure member is closed.

3. The container as claimed in claim 2, wherein the peripheral structure is a rigid frame [(30; 50)] on which the elastically deformable means [(40)] are stretched between two roughly opposite points.

4. The container as claimed in claim 3, wherein the:

- peripheral structure comprises at least one ring [(30; 50)] having an inside diameter D and a center C,
- elastically deformable means are elastic bands [(40)] attached in groups of two juxtaposed elastic bands and fixed to the ring [(30)] at their diametrically opposed ends [(40a)].

5. The container as claimed in claim 4, wherein the closure member is a sleeve [(60)] made of flexible material having a diameter D and a length of at least twice this diameter, each end [(62, 64)] of [which] the sleeve [(60)] passes through each pair of elastic bands [(40)] in the center C of the ring [(30)], where [it] the sleeve is contracted radially in the closed rest state of the device [(10)], or defines a single through opening [(45)] for the object in the open state of the device, in which state the elastic bands [(40)] are deformed radially by the passage of said object.

6. The container as claimed in claim 5, wherein one end [(62)] of the sleeve [(60)] is fixed peripherally to an outer face [(52)] of a second first ring and the other end [(64)] of said sleeve [(60)] is fixed peripherally to an opposite outer face [(32)] of a first second ring [(30)] identical to the other first ring, the sleeve [(60)] being contracted radially in a middle zone [(M)] between each pair of elastic bands [(40)], the latter elastic bands being attached to one or the other of the first or second rings [(30, 50)] which are themselves fixed to each other via their inner faces [(34, 54)].

7. The container as claimed in claim 6, wherein the two first and second rings [(30, 50)] are offset angularly with respect to each other while twisting the sleeve [(60)] axially, this angular offset being preferably approximately 90°.

8. The container as claimed in claim 6 ~~for 7~~, wherein the first and second rings ~~{(30, 50)}~~ are held together by adhesive bonding or by stitching.

9. The container as claimed in ~~{any one of claims 5-8}~~ claim 5, wherein the sleeve ~~{(60)}~~ is made of fabric.

10. The container as claimed in ~~{any one of claims 5-9}~~ claim 5, ~~[characterized in that]~~ the elastic bands ~~{(40)}~~ are eight in number and juxtaposed and attached in pairs distributed in such a way as to pass through the center of their supporting ring ~~{(30)}~~ so as to form in the ~~latter~~ supporting ring eight essentially identical sectors.

11. The container as claimed in ~~{any one of claims 5-10}~~ claim 5, wherein the elastic bands ~~{(40)}~~ are ~~[slightly]~~ under tension on their supporting ring ~~{(30)}~~ in the closed state of the device.

12. The container as claimed in ~~{any one of the preceding claims}~~ claim 1, wherein its shape is that of a straight or curved cylinder and that it possesses a closure device ~~{(10)}~~ at each end.

13. The container as claimed in ~~{any one of the preceding claims}~~ claim 1, wherein it includes at least a part ~~{(7)}~~ made of a transparent material.

14. The container as claimed in ~~{any one of the preceding claims}~~ claim 1, wherein ~~[it can be used under weightless conditions]~~ the container is made of materials suitable for weightless conditions.